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Viewing cable 09LIMA637, AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH OLLANTA HUMALA

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Understanding cables

Every cable message consists of three parts:

- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
- The bottom box presents the body of the cable. The opening can contain a more specific subject, references to other cables ([browse by origin](#) to find them) or additional comment. This is followed by the main contents of the cable: a summary, a collection of specific topics and a comment section.

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Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
09LIMA637	2009-05-04 16:16	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Lima

Appears in these articles:

<http://elcomercio.pe/>

VZCZCXYZ0006
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHPE #0637/01 1241616
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 041616Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0500
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY 2333
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 6534
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8270
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 3833
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1380
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAY 5160
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 9715
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 2515
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO PRIORITY 2355
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 000637

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/01/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH OLLANTA HUMALA

Classified By: Amb. P Michael McKinley for reasons 1.4b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: I met one-...

id: 205404
date: 5/4/2009 16:16
refid: 09LIMA637
origin: Embassy Lima
classification: CONFIDENTIAL
destination:
header:
VZCZCXYZ0006
PP RUEHWEB

DE RUEHPE #0637/01 1241616
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 041616Z MAY 09
FM AMEMBASSY LIMA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0500
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION PRIORITY 2333
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA PRIORITY 6534
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8270
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES PRIORITY 3833
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 1380
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RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO PRIORITY 9715
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 2515
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RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L LIMA 000637

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/01/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [PE](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH OLLANTA HUMALA

Classified By: Amb. P Michael McKinley for reasons 1.4b and d.

¶1. (C) Summary: I met one-on-one with Nationalist Party leader Ollanta Humala April 16 at his request. Across two-and-a-half hours of discussion, Humala revealed perhaps more than he intended of his electoral strategy for regional and congressional elections in 2010 and for presidential elections in 2011. He is clearly working closely with some of the most radical groups in Peru, even as he continues to project a moderate nationalist line on economic, international, and political issues. Ollanta has also successfully raised his media profile in recent weeks, in part by joining a growing national consensus on what should be done about the VRAE region, where Sendero and drug traffickers hold sway. I was struck by a growing self-confidence, a view echoed by at least one other veteran observer of the political scene. I was also left with the impression that Ollanta remains ambivalent about fully abandoning radical alternatives. He is open to suggestions on international travel and, for at least the third time in as many discussions over the past ten months, indicated his interest in visiting the US. We should consider our options on supporting his travel should he formally make a request. End Summary.

¶2. (C) Ollanta was supposed to visit with his wife Nadine Herrera, international secretary of his party, and reputedly the radical political brains behind Humala. Her father, however, is on his deathbed (and died April 24), and the meeting was one-on-one at the residence. Humala, dressed in jeans and a polo shirt, was extremely relaxed, and without the coaxing we have seen previously from his wife, remarkably open on a number of topics.

Bases, VRAE, and Drugs

¶3. (C) An April 9 Sendero Luminoso attack had left 14

soldiers dead in the VRAE. Despite several attacks over the previous twelve months, this incident sparked a level of sustained national media and Congressional attention on the VRAE not seen for years. Ollanta reflected that preoccupation, and said he saw his opening to speak with some degree of authority with both myself and the media because of his past as a military officer fighting Sendero in the Huancavelica area in the late 1980s.

¶4. (C) Ollanta first raised his usual concerns about an American base in Pichari, a report he claimed to have seen of upcoming joint exercises involving 3,000 Colombians and Americans in Peru, and the numerous US naval ship visits planned for 2009. I rebutted Ollanta's claims in greater detail than on previous occasions. I did acknowledge the problems in perception we had encountered during the New Horizons humanitarian assistance exercises, and Ollanta pointed out it was difficult for the local population of Ayacucho (formerly the heart of Sendero) to see military forces as benign. Locals saw the humanitarian projects as preparations for establishing a more permanent US presence in the area. I told Ollanta what he should already know: that USG support for infrastructure improvement in Peru was part of a decades-long tradition of American cooperation with Peruvian security forces, and that this assistance would continue.

¶5. (C) Ollanta dropped the subject, and instead discussed his efforts to play a constructive role during the week following the April 9 Sendero attack in Sanabamba. By way of background, he noted that the VRAE would remain a near impossible area to control. Virtually all the population (of 200,000) was in some way tied to the drug trade. Efforts to develop alternative crops would not work given the challenges of the terrain and the poor infrastructure. The police and army personnel stationed there were completely corrupted, and unwilling to engage. Ollanta reprised his call for creating a \$200 million fund to buy the annual coca crop as alternatives were developed and the government provided social services and infrastructure. He estimated that this would be a fraction of the cost of continuing to prosecute a war in the VRAE. He stated that any efforts to prematurely eradicate coca production (at almost half Peru's total) would not only fail, but radicalize the population. When Ollanta pressed on his proposal to buy out the coca farmers, I suggested that this was an idea which had little support, and presumably for good reasons. I strongly urged Humala to travel to Vienna and other capitals to develop a firmer appreciation of how the scourge of trafficking worldwide was tackled. Humala was receptive, but asked how he could go about doing so.

¶6. (C) In recent days, Ollanta had reached out to the government. He had spoken twice with Prime Minister Yehude Simon and communicated a proposal to establish a multi-party commission to oversee development in the VRAE. Ollanta had proposed one of his supporters to chair the commission, someone who knew the region and the issues. Ollanta rationalized that it was he, and not the government, who had most to lose from this national unity response to the crisis. If the commission failed to deliver in the VRAE, Humala's Nationalist Party image would be damaged nationally. Simon had expressed interest, but then spoken to President Garcia. The answer back was "interesting idea", which Humala interpreted as a no. He reiterated that he had made the offer as a patriot: the situation in the VRAE was serious.

¶7. (C) In explaining his concern, Ollanta noted that recent human rights abuses claims against him were politically motivated, and as unlikely to prosper as previous accusations that he had supported his radical brother Antauro's coup attempt a few years ago. The new incident had a woman claiming that an army commander code-named "Carlos" had cold-bloodedly killed her son during the first war against Sendero. The murder had in fact taken place when Ollanta was no longer assigned to the region as an officer. He discussed his days as an officer in the field, the importance of winning hearts and minds, and of Sendero violations he had

witnessed. (In a subsequent appearance on a television news show, Ollanta expounded at length on the situation in the VRAE. Much of the time, he sounded remarkably moderate and concerned.)

Politics

¶8. (C) I asked Humala about the current political scene. Ollanta indicated his desire to be constructive, but grew more pointed in his remarks when I asked him about electoral prospects. He thought the Fujimori trial had hurt Keiko, the former president's daughter and standard-bearer. Ollanta stated he remained a strong candidate for the future, and the tactics of his opponents and specifically President Garcia were to ensure Ollanta did not reach the second round of a presidential election, as he successfully did in 2006.

¶9. (C) Ollanta had carefully studied the polling on why he had lost in 2006 (in quite some detail), calculating that the proliferation of candidates weakened his candidacy. The emergence of the recently retired (and controversial) army commander Edwin Donayre as a potential presidential candidate was a perfect example. "Someone is behind him", because Donayre would never be a serious candidate. Ollanta did testily acknowledge Donayre could draw off votes that would otherwise go to the Nationalist candidate. When I ventured to suggest, on the basis of my numerous contacts with Donayre over the previous year, that the general had the common touch, Humala was dismissive. He said that the apparent affection soldiers exhibited for Donayre, was very much a product of military hierarchy. Enlisted men took their cue from the behavior of their commanders, and responded accordingly. Donayre was in fact a "clown," with little to offer, and a simplistic populist message. (Note: Donayre is virulently anti-Chilean, a Quechua speaker, and rails against privilege. End Note.) Humala also mentioned that on the left, NGOs and others had sought to encourage the leftist activist priest Father Marco Arana to run, convincing the latter he could have national appeal, but this was a forlorn exercise. (Note: Arana is based in Cajamarca in the north, and his primary platform is fighting mining investments, especially foreign companies, in the name of impoverished local populations and the environment. In a May 4 interview, he answered questions likening him to Paraguayan President Lugo. End Note.)

¶10. (C) I spoke about the global economic crisis, the impact on Peru, and suggested there seemed to be a general international consensus on how to respond. I added that Presidents Chavez and Morales were rather isolated in railing against measures that even Russia and China were prepared to support. Humala said that just because he saw himself in the leftist international bloc did not mean he agreed with everything his regional allies said or did.

¶11. (C) This led to a discussion about how Humala interacted with his party and Congress. Humala noted that he had only gone to Congress two or three times since losing the presidential election. He managed his Nationalist Party congresspersons directly, however. When they were first elected in 2006, he had had to be a "military general" in order to forge a common voice. He met with the caucus weekly, and it was not a simple task: mixing professional lawyers with indigenous representatives was a challenge. They would sit at different ends of the table. As things gelled, he relied on more informal mechanisms, but he stayed on top of whatever was happening in Congress.

¶12. (C) I asked about how the Nationalist Party dealt with more radical political groupings in Peru. Ollanta, without hesitating, responded that he dealt with them directly. In fact, two days previously he had met in Lima with far-left labor leader (Mario Huaman), and the leaders of Patria Roja (Alberto Moreno) and the MNI. They had discussed the strategy for the 2010 regional and local elections. I expressed surprise, and asked how this coalition-building squared with the more moderate image Ollanta was trying to project. After correcting me by noting he was moderate on

national political and economic issues, Humala said he was the one in the driver's seat. He was the one with political legitimacy; he was the one with leadership capability; he was the one with a national program. The other actors had none of the above. Moreno had won less than a quarter of one percent of the national vote in 2006. Moreover, these groupings were riven by internal dissent and looking to use political power to secure positions. (Note: The implication was that they had lost their way. End Note.) Most critically, they did not understand that the key raison d'etre for a political party was winning power. Everything else flowed from winning elections.

¶13. (C) I asked what this motley coalition of radicals did for a coherent national message, and mobilization of support. Humala indicated that these groups were already active in radicalizing populations, and it was, in effect, better to have them inside the tent rather than outside. He discussed their potential role in places like Pasco, Junin, Cajamarca, and in the south. He also sought to help them where appropriate: a group representing workers in the sierra had been in touch asking for money to help their members stay afloat in a deteriorating economic situation. When it came to the national platform, however, it was he and the Nationalist Party that would decide what policies were. Humala had no doubt he could control the messaging of the coalition.

¶14. (C) I closed by noting that working with radicals nonetheless had implications, and would not be appealing to the wider political spectrum Humala sought to attract. Humala surprisingly took this on board and said he would take a closer look at what Patria Roja was doing in Lima. (Note: Our indications are that Patria Roja and Sendero are looking to work in universities again. End Note.)

International and Travel

¶15. (C) Humala asked me what he thought about recent changes in Cuba. I responded that it appeared that Raul Castro was tightening his grip, possibly for change in the future. Humala commented that Cuba's was an "extremely hermetic" government. He thought the dismissal of Perez Roque and Lage had been handled in a rough fashion. He added that there were a number of people below their level who had also been dismissed summarily, and regretted it. (Note: It was hard to read where Ollanta was taking this point. End Note.)

¶16. (C) In addition to asking about how to go about arranging travel to UN offices and Europe (I suggested Ollanta talk to relevant diplomatic missions), Humala made a strong pitch for travel to the US. He did not have a date in mind but wanted to be sure that if and when he applied for a visa he would not be embarrassed (by a turndown, presumably).

I promised to look into the possibility at the right time. Ollanta also asked how he could be in touch with the Democratic Party. His request was inchoate but repeated: he wanted to have contact with the party in the context of developing transparent relations with the United States. He also repeated previous assurances that he wanted to maintain open channels with the mission in Lima.

MCKINLEY

=====CABLE ENDS=====